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ABSTRACT

This report presents information from a seminar that brought together 24 educators for 5 full days over 5 months (from November 1997-March 1998) to discuss issues of preparing preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and administrators for student diversity and equitable classrooms. Participating educators included teachers, administrators, counselors, and faculty and staff from preparatory institutions of higher learning. The discussions focused on such issues as: what diversity is, gender factors, ethnicity and religion, and socioeconomic status. For each issue, the report presents information on strategies for teacher preparation and inservice training. An appendix presents a high school student's 1997 speech to the Chenango County Grange about the New York Wired Scholars Program. (SM)

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A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE:

Preparing Educators for Diversity

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School of Education
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A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE:

Preparing Educators for Diversity

• January 1999 •

A Report of the Select Seminar on Preparing Educators for Diversity

Sponsored by the Capital Area School Development Association, School of Education, University at Albany, State University of New York and supported with funds from the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (VATEA #8010-98-1002 and 8020-98-2003).

Table of Contents

Select Seminar Process 2

Seminar Participants 3

Introduction 4

What Is Diversity? 7

Gender

Gender, Difference and Stereotyping 8

Mutual Exclusivity of Gender Role Stereotypes 8

New Research Perspectives on Psychological Development—Making Connections 9

Where Are the Men? 10

Strategies for Teacher Preparation and Development 10

Recommended Strategies 11

Ethnicity and Religion

The Term "Race" 14

Caring Classroom Communities 14

Respectful Searching 14

Connectedness in Diversity 15

Nurturing the Spiritual and Aesthetic 15

Teacher Preparation and In-Service Training 16

Socio-Economics

"Class" as an Issue of Diversity 18

Immersion Experiences 18

In-Service Teacher Development 19

Our Response to Diversity 20

Afterword 21

Works Cited or Discussed 22

Appendix 23

Select Seminar Process

The Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA) has been sponsoring Select Seminars since 1985 as a form of professional development. These Seminars provide a forum for educators to consider major issues and make written recommendations to improve the quality of education. Reports of the Select Seminars are published by CASDA and circulated regionally and nationally. Reports have been reproduced by four State Departments of Education for use in professional development and orientation programs.

The Select Seminar process has received a great deal of attention and has been replicated across the country. It has been extremely gratifying to be credited by colleagues with developing what is essentially a quite simple format and process.

The CASDA Select Seminars follow a very simple structure based upon a set of guiding principles:

1. Participants need to commit adequate time—to work, to reflect, and to write. Most Seminars have been conducted for five full days spread about a month apart over the first three months with the final session being a two-day overnight retreat in the middle to the end of the fourth month.
2. A conducive working environment is very important. The Seminars have been conducted in "protected environments"—away from the work site, in quiet and aesthetically pleasing surroundings with special care being given to the quality of food and refreshments. We believe this clearly is a first step in communicating to participants that the Seminar is special and there are high expectations that the deliberations of its members will have an important result.
3. The Seminar participants are the experts. We believe these Select Seminars have been highly successful in part because of the high degree of personal and professional respect afforded participants and the central belief on which the Seminar series was founded: "that consciously competent teachers and administrators are the best arbiters of educational practice." While participants do extensive reading during the Seminars, visiting experts and lecturers are not usually a part of this experience. The participants of a Seminar are the body of experts.
4. Roles are "checked at the door." One's ideas must stand on their own, be debated, accepted, or discarded without reference to one's position or education. There is never just one role group represented in a Seminar.
5. Seminars are self-governing entities with organizers serving the group. The coordination of the Seminar is managed by personnel from CASDA. After providing the initial structure and on-going logistical support, they work to transfer the governance and direction from themselves to the participants. By the end of the Seminar, it is fair to say that the Seminar becomes self-governed with the coordinators taking direction from the Seminar group.
6. The experience is at least as important as the product. All Seminar participants agree that the process, the experience, is most important; in fact, the report might be quite different if the process continued over time, instead of representing but one point in an ongoing process when, although there is much agreement on important issues, there is some disagreement as well. Even so, the report provides an important documentation of the experience and serves to validate for each of the participants the energy and effort they expended. We also firmly believe that such an ongoing conversation can only result in better education for all of our children.

We also firmly believe that this process effectively promotes significant professional development. The use of the process in other states, the popularity of the Seminar reports, and the many testimonials from the participants over the years convince us of the viability of the process.

Seminar Participants

Richard Bamberger. Capital Area School Development Association, The University at Albany, 135 Western Avenue, Husted 211, Albany, NY 12222

Elizabeth Craft. Mohonasen Central School, 2072 Curry Road, Schenectady, NY 12303

Dana Crobok. Lansingburgh Central School, Turnpike Elementary School, 55 New Turnpike Road, Troy, NY 12182

Erin DuBois. Greenville Central School, Scott M. Ellis Elementary, Route 32, Greenville, NY 12083

Patricia Empie. Averill Park Central School, Algonquin Middle School, 333 NY 351, Averill Park, NY 12018

Mary Ann Etu. Vocational Equity Coordinator, New York State Education Department, 315 EB, Albany, NY 12234

Alice Fay. Troy High School, 1950 Burdett Avenue, Troy, NY 12180

Craig Flood. NYS Career Options Institute, 6 British American Boulevard, Suite G, Latham, NY 12110

Maureen Gillette. The College of St. Rose, 132 Western Avenue, Albany, NY 12203

Kay Gormley. Russell Sage College, 45 Ferry Street, Troy, NY 12180

Sister Beatrice Hall. Union College, Lamont House Graduate Center, Union Street, Schenectady, NY 12308-3151

Kasandra M. Jackson. Schenectady City Schools, Communities in Schools Academy, 330 Oakwood Avenue, Schenectady, NY 12303

Joan Kratz. Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk High School, Route 9W, Ravena, NY 12143

Karen Loughran. Ulster BOCES, POB 1176, Port Ewen, NY 12466

Mary McClellan. Ulster BOCES, Alternative School at Tillson, PO Box 240, 56 Grist Mill Road, Tillson, NY 12486

Marta Nunez Meacham. Bethlehem Central School, 700 Delaware Avenue, Delmar, NY 12054

Ray O'Connell. Questar III, 1550 Schuurman Road, Castleton, NY 12033

Grace Osborne. Ilion Central School District, Weber Avenue, Ilion, NY 13357

Herb Perkins. Green Island UFSD, 171 Hudson Avenue, Green Island, NY 12183

Barbara Ring. Career Options Institute, Capital Region BOCES, 6 British American Boulevard, Latham, NY 12110

Jerry Rivera-Wilson. Academy for Initial Teacher Preparation, School of Education, University at Albany, Education B-8, Albany, NY 12222

Edie Schultz. Cobleskill-Richmondville Central School District, Radez School, 14 East Main Street, Richmondville, NY 12149

Julia Scutieri. Saratoga Springs City Schools, Dorothy Nolan Elementary School, 221 Jones Road, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Dee Warner. Capital Area School Development Association, The University at Albany, 135 Western Avenue, Husted 211, Albany, NY 12222

Introduction

Diversity is more than a buzzword; it is one of the most crucial issues facing educators today, cutting across all levels of decision-making and policy formulation. Diversity issues surface whenever we take a close look at interactions between students, students and teachers, among teachers themselves, and between administrators and staff. Whether or not we choose to think about diversity issues, they shape personal interactions and inform decisions regarding what to teach and how to teach. These decisions operate at the classroom, school, district, and even the federal levels. Attitudes towards the value and place of diversity in the educational system affect curriculum development, testing trends, textbook purchases, hiring, and spending as well as classroom dynamics down to the sort of welcome each kindergartner meets on the first day of school.

Although the percentage of new teachers who are from minority groups has been increasing, new teachers are still predominantly white and middle class. The needs of under-funded urban schools with multi-racial, multi-ethnic populations have continued to grow at an astounding rate. New waves of immigrants are coming into our school systems from all parts of the globe, bringing with them new religious and cultural issues. Inclusion policies have widened the range of students found in the average classroom. The consolidation of school districts has led to larger schools with students from every corner of the socio-economic spectrum.

Twenty-four educators came together for five full-days over a five month period from November 1997 to March 1998 to discuss these issues and, ultimately, to make recommendations on how to prepare teachers, administrators, and counselors for the equitable classroom. The assembled educators were teachers, administrators, counselors, and faculty and staff from preparatory institutions of higher learning. Discussions were varied, rich, serious, and at times emotional as we wrestled with this daunting task.

The first day's meeting made it obvious that "those of us assembled for this Select Seminar come from many 'places'—both personally and professionally. It is quite refreshing, and challenging, to have so many different views represented. As we look at the issues associated with preparing educators in the areas of diversity and equity, it is difficult to determine just where to begin."

"I am amazed at the range and diversity of thought in our group. Each comes with his/her own intellectual baggage and perspectives. There is a general consensus on the need for change, but the how of finding it, or classification of issues still appears to be eluding us. We have talked about ethnic diversity, gender diversity as well as empowerment issues."

While the gathering was exciting, the task before us seemed formidable. People felt they had more questions than answers. Self-doubt entered into one participant's first day: "How far should we go in teaching students what is acceptable 'polite' behavior for school and later the workplace? How do we define such behavior? Is what is acceptable changing? How do we respond to those changes? How do we as teachers and administrators keep abreast of the changes? Should we pay regular visits (shadowing) to colleges and job sites in order to monitor what is going on out there?"

"Looking at it from another point of view, will educational institutions be able to influence what will be accepted in society as a whole? Should we take on that responsibility? Should we defend the standards of the past into the future, or if we do, will our students view us as out of step and anachronistic and, therefore, ignore all our efforts to educate them in curricular areas?"

In spite of the questions regarding the task ahead, one participant expressed a generally held sentiment: "The morning's conversation was such a wonderful reminder of the richness and value of time in considering and reflecting on the issues we as educators face minute by minute in our schools. There is a sadness that such a simple gift as time is more often not allowed much space in the efforts at educational reform. That time today, however, allowed for the identification and discussion of a wide range of equity and diversity issues and was further accentuated by the willingness to listen and understand each individual's contribution to the task at hand. The listening and valuing of each other's perspective reflects the kind of learning environments we were feeling could provide a foundation for schools designed to trying to meet the needs of all students."

At the end of that first day, one participant expressed despair and hope in the same breath: "Ugh!! We've unearthed a million issues that seem like the world's most complex spider web—entwined, sticky, confused, snares that tie us to unjust or 'inhuman' ways of living with each other. But I do hear repeated hints of hope—a reflection of our belief that how we act and what we affirm with students do matter, can be efficacious. Despair is not an option. These conversations can offer insight, support, strategies which hold off despair while not sugar-coating the realities."

A month and a half later when the Select Seminar met for the second time, the introspection and discussion continued. One participant observed, "Looking inside ourselves is not as comfortable or as easy as 'straight teaching.' How do we get our colleagues to do some inner soul searching? Getting teacher candidates while they're 'in training' is great—get them in the practice of introspection while they're learning about goals, objectives, lesson and theme/unity plans, task analysis, etc. What about from the other end? Those of us who may have been, or just feel like they have been, in this education business since the dawn of time —how do we introduce yet 'another' curriculum/agenda for them to teach without an outcry of 'Too much! Too much!' "

Another participant decried the rush-to-solution mentality we embrace in education, saying, "Our society has built a bandwagon of 'quick-fix' ideals that I wish people didn't embrace so quickly. Because of this, ideas on what is best in education seem to always be at the upswing of a pendulum rather than somewhere in the middle. Perhaps we could better serve ourselves and education as a whole if we see educational experiences and improvements as more of the road that bandwagon rides along on—a continuum of changes, modifications, alterations."

Still another participant realized the immense difficulty of teaching well. "During today's conversations it occurred to me that the business of educating diverse populations is in reality a very messy business. How to show respect and to seek out admirable characteristics in every student and parent that is presented is not a simple task. How to engage individuals whose standards and values may seem very foreign in the quest for knowledge is a lot more difficult than simply preparing a lesson plan."

Another participant reflected upon diversity as an issue of role modeling in terms of staff composition. "I begin to think about how we hope to encourage diversity in buildings that lack diverse staffing. How do we encourage the employment of more diverse staff? There are many wonderful teachers in all districts but what do we do when we are not visually diverse? Students need to look around and see a 'sameness' often to feel comfortable. I worry that too many children feel isolated because there aren't adults 'like them' in some environments."

During the course of the day, one participant saw the process of the Select Seminar itself as a "valuable vehicle for effecting change in our school communities. Faculty, staff, and children would benefit from this process when problem solving or when trying to make a change in delivery of curriculum. In each area of discussion my perspective has been broadened and/or enriched."

At the end of this second day, one group's conclusion received widespread approval: "Trusting, honoring, respecting and valuing can be taught in and through any academic area and needs to be part of discussions, assignments and behaviors. The diverse issues need to be an overlay of any course of study."

On the third day of the Select Seminar, participants began working in groups that stayed together that day and through the two days at the Rensselaerville Institute. One group looked at equity from the viewpoint of gender. A second group was charged with examining equity with regard to ethnicity and religion; the third group considered equity regarding socio-economics. While one of the groups was charged with defining diversity, all of the groups gave input into that definition. These group assignments govern the organization of the report that follows.

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What is Diversity?

1. ***The state or fact of being diverse: difference, unlikeness:*** 2. ***Variety, multiformity:*** 3. ***A point of difference.*** (Random House Dictionary).

This word "diversity" brings to mind the richness and the tapestry of life—the way things are in the natural world. Through our discussions, we came to the agreement that our goal is to help educators respond to diversity with inclusivity rather than exclusivity. As educators, we strive to honor and respect ourselves as individuals, to listen to people different from us, and to learn to "dance" with others as we weave our own stories in this life. Despite our final agreement, there were times in our discussions when "diversity" evoked images of limiting the way we view the world—compartmentalizing, classifying and labeling people and groups of people.

Much discussion centered on labeling. How do we use labels to deepen awareness and sensitivity when the labels themselves can be so divisive? "One thing that seems important to me is not losing sight of the value of diversity, and our natural tendency to describe, to classify, to name. We don't need to pretend that differences don't exist—people are different in so many ways, and those differences are good. Sometimes our discussion makes me feel as if we want to teach people to avoid the problems that diversity brings. That isn't especially helpful. Pretending that someone isn't less academically capable, or ignoring a person's blindness, or avoiding a discussion of a particular religion because not everyone shares that religion isn't honoring diversity—it is avoiding it."

We discussed, argued, meditated for long periods. One participant questioned, "How do we balance the celebration of diversity and the celebration of the individual? The individual is more than the sum of his/her parts. When we celebrate diversity are we celebrating the parts? A person isn't Latino, homosexual, handicapped, gifted, etc. How can we avoid pigeonholing people while trying to recognize one of their attributes? Is it possible that this is a limiting process for some people rather than a liberating one?"

The issue of long-term societal goals arose. "The possibility of achieving a color-blind or gender-blind or handicap-blind society is, I admit, quite remote. However, what happened to striving towards that goal? Is it not a worthy goal? How does that goal blend with the goal of recognizing or celebrating diversity?"

In the end, we concluded, "It isn't the labels that are the problem; it is the feelings and attitudes that we have about the people who have the condition named by the label. [We must]...deal honestly with the facts of the great variety of the human condition."

Gender, Difference and Stereotyping

With the broader question of how to prepare educators for an increasingly diverse world framing our discussion, one participant pointed out, "There seem to be many topics related to diversity and equity that involve gender. How do we begin addressing this issue?"

Despite major social movements in the past fifty years, gender role stereotypes continue to support differential expectations and behaviors for males and females. We acknowledged that all of these notions about gender clearly play a role, conscious or not, in the decisions and choices we make throughout our lives.

We discussed at length how stereotyping can negatively affect expectations we have of ourselves and others and, ultimately, the choices that students are required to make throughout the process of their education. Further, we felt that sensitizing teachers to patterns of gender stereotyping was central to the challenge of creating learning environments aimed at interrupting the impact of stereotypes on the process of learning for girls and boys.

Our group's conversation was grounded in the belief that the educational arena, including teacher preparation and ongoing teacher development, provides one of the best opportunities to interrupt the impact of gender stereotypes and deepen an understanding of the relationship gender has to all other issues of diversity.

One participant reflected: "I am struck not only by the diversity of perspectives but the really complex nature of attempting to prioritize or even to try to encompass an area as wide and as deep as 'equity.' I plead guilty to having thought only in terms of gender equity before our first Seminar. Even gender equity is an intricate issue but then to go on to class equity, racial equity, and cultural equity! Yet clearly these equity issues and others cannot be separated because they are necessary and worthwhile. Reading commentary about the 'new standards,' I wonder how the idea of equity interacts with these standards. Holding all to the same standard—is that truly equitable? All of us recognize the current playing field is not level and question how to make it more level. Can the field ever be leveled?"

Mutual exclusivity of gender role stereotypes

As with other stereotypes, gender-based stereotypes are divisive and limiting, functioning in a mutually exclusive manner. Stereotyping serves to devalue positive human traits, such as strength in women or nurturance, compassion and intuitive functioning in men.

One participant addressed this challenge: "In terms of gender fairness, we need to facilitate change toward more open ways of being. Children are taught to fit into stereotypical groups. Boys in school want to be tough, play sports and fight. Girls cling to their dolls, their easy bake ovens and play make-up. I struggle with these stereotypes and encourage my students to recognize differences as uniqueness."

Girls are more often found in the "kitchen corner" in a kindergarten class, while boys are more likely to congregate in the block corner. A simple example, perhaps, but complex when we consider the possible reasons behind it: what does it reflect? Gender role stereotyping? Group and self-expectations? Students' differential interests and choices shaped by stereotypes and socialization? Lack of teacher awareness to intervene? Any of these are possible factors, but they are most likely operating at unconscious levels. This being so, scenarios that reflect stereotypes are most effectively interrupted when educators are provided with opportunities for reflection

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that raise their awareness of the dynamics involved and enable them to see through the haze of unconscious gender role stereotypes and expectations.

The limiting nature of gender stereotypes and differential values find their way into institutional policy and practice. Consider the following observation: "In our school, all of the textbooks for middle school and high school, as well as textbooks for private schools are held for 'distribution' in what is known as the 'girls' gym,' the smaller of two gymnasiums located in the high school. Girls' physical education classes are left with no real location to conduct classes for the first five to six weeks of school. They are permitted to use the balcony of the boys' gym to walk. The implication here is, of course, that girls' physical education classes are less valued. What is even sadder, I have never heard any of the girls complain."

Despite the passage of Title IX and its legislative mandate against gender bias over twenty-five years ago, this school district still separates girls and boys in physical education. That institutional decision has led to the girls' limited access to the same kind of opportunities that boys have in physical education for at least a substantial portion of the school year. While the issue of the girls not complaining might indicate their own lack of awareness, there is a deeper sense of sadness that the educators within that school have also not intervened. This example is representative of the concerns we discussed regarding the power of unconsciousness in fueling the persistence of gender-based stereotyping and bias. We all agreed that it is the cumulative effect of such unquestioned single acts that provides the real lasting impact.

New Research Perspectives on Psychological Development—*Making Connections*

Any current discussion of gender is not complete without acknowledging the recent research on the psychological development of girls and boys by Harvard University psychologist and researcher Carol Gilligan and her colleagues. Their research challenged traditional developmental theories of psychology based on research conducted exclusively with white males and then generalized across both gender and racial lines. The resulting theory, by default, literally held the "white male experience" as the ***standard*** against which all other groups were to be measured.

The standards we have come to value and associate in men are likewise embedded in our culture's institutional values, including schools and traditional educational pedagogy, making it more obvious to our group how such values have served to support males at the exclusion of females in our schools. The same standards support intolerance for difference and place a lesser value on the development of qualities associated with relationship and connection in schools.

One participant shared: "Disconnection is a male issue and it is probably no small coincidence that disconnectedness lies at the heart of this 'diversity' problem in schools and in society…These institutions in truth have served relatively few, but have given the illusion of privilege, position, and power primarily to men. The disconnectedness inherent in objectivity, rationality, hierarchy and competition (all valued institutionally in our western culture) has served to chart the course of men's lives and our society. In turn, it fuels the problem of valuing diversity and differences through connections that we are facing in this Seminar."

Relational psychology, as reflected in the work of Gilligan and others, supports the theory that healthy individual growth and development necessarily takes place in our relationships with others. This new view of psychological development allows for differences and diverse experiences without attributing hierarchical value. It reflects a perspective that is inherently ***inclusive*** and allows the possibility of multiple perspectives. Our working definition of diversity reflected ***inclusion***, not exclusion. As such, the goal is to create learning environments that facilitate a respect for, and acceptance of, differences through the development of healthy relationships within

schools and classrooms. One participant framed the challenge as follows: "I'm not sure that everyone looks at every group situation as an 'Us and Them,' but certainly that does happen a lot. To counteract that we need to open conversations, listen to each other and find commonalities. This is true as well with men and women, where people really seem to need to see only differences. That allows us without reflection to put 'the other' into a box and not deal with them as individuals. It particularly allows men to do this about women—because they hold the power by virtue of male privilege."

Where Are the Men?

Having reminded ourselves that disconnection and detachment are themes in the psychological development of males, we then considered whether it was coincidental that the conversation in this Seminar included the voices of very few men by the time we reached the presentation session on the final day. We had begun with approximately ten males around the table on the first day of the Seminar. On the final day, four months later, there were only three men left to share their thoughts and perspectives in the reporting of each group's work. Men's absence in this final phase of the Seminar was glaringly evident to the participants and created considerable speculation as to why this was the case. Some focused on the stereotype that gender equity is a ***women's issue***. As such, men are simply not interested or do not see themselves or a place for males in the issues considered. In a related sense, others suggested that where these and other issues of diversity were concerned, men's hierarchical view of the priorities in their work gave them permission to dismiss themselves from this Seminar.

The absence of these men was a profound loss to the very mission of this Seminar. It was felt by many that relevant questions need to be raised about the absence of men on that final day and even more generally in the consideration of these issues beyond the Select Seminar. In her final reflection, one participant wrote: "Where are all the men in this discussion?...Until men put a voice to issues of equity, and I mean white middle class men, how can this ever truly become a mainstream issue to be addressed by and for all of us?"

Another participant wrote about this issue within the context of her own school setting: "Gender is an issue in the staffing of many buildings. In our staff of thirty plus educators, there are only four men. Two of these men have a tough love approach that scares many students. The other two men are very easy going individuals. I have found that due to these different approaches to teaching, many children form strong opinions about what male teachers are like based on a very small number of experiences. I feel that to think about gender equity we must begin to discover how to encourage men to become teachers and fight the stereotypical expectations of society. It is precious to see a man that teaches kindergarten and nurtures the children. Often men are pressured to teach in middle schools or rough institutional type settings. They seldom are allowed to venture away from the macho attitude that's expected of them."

As we began to develop our group's strategies for preparing educators for diversity, we felt the need to reflect our concern about this issue with the following recommendation:

> ***"Men need to have more opportunities to invest themselves and develop a higher consciousness of their place in issues of gender equity and diversity."***

Strategies for Teacher Preparation and Development

> ***"Gender equity implies more than equal access: it requires mutual empowerment that serves to enhance both individual and group development."***

We clearly recognized the difficulty of distilling our conversation into a single statement aimed at capturing the essential elements we identified during the months we discussed our groups' issues. We do, however, feel that

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this recommendation truly reflects our considerations. Furthermore, it serves to support the following ***Strategies*** that likewise grew out of our work during the five days that we met.

Recommended Strategies

1. **Create learning environments that promote an awareness of the interconnectedness of gender issues with other issues of equity and diversity, as well as within the curriculum. Fitting diversity in...*content or context?***

Educators frequently express a sense of being inundated by a multitude of issues, academic and otherwise. Reflecting on this dilemma one participant wrote: "I have been more and more concerned with the interconnection of all the issues that were identified this morning. As such, it becomes clearer that the 'solution' is less an issue of trying to juggle an increasingly chaotic collection of equity issues and more a matter of creating contexts in our schools that are grounded in the mutual respect of both differences and the common ground that is shared among any community of individuals."

Solutions to the problems of diversity, we felt, are founded in the development of a pedagogy that facilitates connections between issues and individuals in any learning environment. Solutions, then, are more a ***condition of the environment*** or ***context*** within which learning takes place than the specific ***content*** of any curriculum. Teacher preparation and development programs must emphasize the connection between pedagogy and the learning environment.

2. **Actively engage educators in opportunities for conscious reflection and discussion of the inequalities that exist in our society.**

Raising consciousness through reflection.

Gender role stereotypes become connected to our expectations for behavior through our unconscious thought processes. These can be both the expectations we have of ourselves as either male or female, as well as for the males and females with whom we interact throughout our lives.

In the process of educational change, consciousness of the issue always precedes the change. We all felt it was particularly important to assist educators in developing a consciousness of the limiting nature that gender expectations can have on both females and males. Further, we agreed that providing regular opportunities for

reflection, introspection and discussion of personal experiences of these limitations can assist educators in understanding and developing strategies that counter those forces.

Another participant said about a situation in a school: "A few years ago we had a real gender equity issue brought up not by administration, faculty, or parents, but by the students themselves. One of our girl basketball players definitely and repeatedly struck another basketball player on the opposing team. The girl was benched for that game and suspended from a future game. The students were furious and actually staged a 'walkout' in protest. Their point? That the boys' basketball team players are often in scuffles and they are not punished. Different rules for males and females."

This writer reflects on gender bias at a conference she attended: "Two years ago I attended a full day conference which was sponsored by a statewide organization dedicated to the advancement of women in certain management arenas. The participants were primarily white women with a few persons of color and a few males also participating. The speaker, who was a white female, told several jokes that poked fun at males. The audience rewarded her efforts with hearty laughter and applause. I was struck by the scene: A group of educated women, many of whom had related stories of inappropriate treatment at the hands of males, were engaging in the very kind of behavior which so offended them in other settings…For me, the whole scenario reinforced how fundamental some issues are. Biases exist in all of us about those who are different in any way. Group dynamics can enable even a well-intentioned person to commit a sexist act so as not to risk offending the rest of the group. And finally, that some level of catharsis is necessary for groups or individuals that feel they have been victimized in the past. The inherent risk is that many people would singly react to the offending behavior rather than to try and understand it, thereby perpetuating the unbroken cycle of 'them versus us'!"

Another focused on classroom practice aimed at raising awareness: "I am using poetry, song lyrics in my Honors class that speak to equity—gender, culture, socioeconomic. Right now we are talking about boys—using Dar William's song 'When Peter Pan was a Girl'—and how boys lose some things as they grow. It's quite a switch for the class to look at a boy's transition and the losses that accompany that transition."

Yet another writes: "I think I believed if I presented enough diverse material that would ease some of the prejudices and racism and egocentrism in my school, but it's even more basic than that: doing gender exercises and reflections are so important. I try to be aware of this and I am always on the lookout for songs, poems etc., for journal responses about gender issues, but for some reason, I didn't feel the 'core' of gender until now."

The practice of teacher reflection, likewise can help to frame the context or environment within which teachers and other members of the educational community conduct their important work.

3. Promote and foster collaboration in the educational environment that minimizes the traditional teaching practices done in isolation.

Teacher preparation and staff development programs must promote and support approaches that assist educators in valuing collaboration in the school setting. Strategies such as team teaching, interdisciplinary

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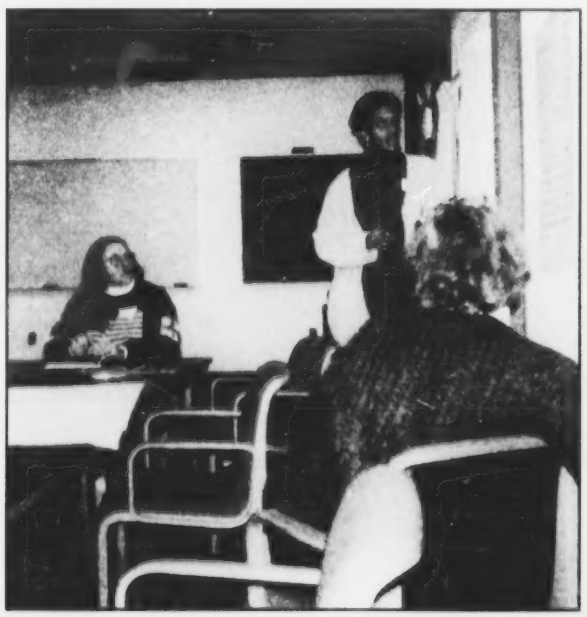
teaching, and project-based teaming are all examples of approaches that support collaboration and the development of interpersonal relationships among educators.

4. Assist educators in understanding and developing learning experiences that promote "*perspective taking*" abilities in students.

Cooperative problem-solving, experiential approaches, project-based learning and other collaborative pedagogies that integrate reflection on group process and development of interpersonal skills, in addition to knowledge, can provide perspective taking experiences for students. Such experiences can assist in providing students with the experiences that mirror real world situations and help them develop the skills necessary to successfully work with others in an increasingly diverse and global workforce.

Teaching strategies that incorporate a focus on the development of ***emotional intelligence*** likewise provide opportunities for students to understand and appreciate their connections with others. The ability to develop healthy interpersonal relationships, grounded in caring and empathy, is one of the indicators of emotional intelligence. With respect to our understanding of gender, our group felt that this area was of particular importance in assisting boys in schools to interrupt the male stereotypes that discourage emotional expression, compassion and other qualities identified as feminine in our culture. Pedagogies that promote ***respect***, ***active listening***, ***role playing***, ***conflict resolution*** and other inclusive practices all contribute to the development of emotional intelligence. Teaching practices such as this facilitate the development of caring communities of girls and boys in schools that support individual achievement and interpersonal growth.



Ethnicity and Religion

The Term "Race"

The use of the term "race" as a category almost immediately became an issue in this Select Seminar. We would discuss and table it and then discuss "it" again and again. Can "ethnicity" replace "race?" What about "color?" Some participants argued that the term "race" was originally used for purposes of justifying the enslavement of a people. Given the negative connotations of the word, they concluded that the word "race" needed to be excluded from our deliberations and writings about diversity. Others felt that by eliminating race as a component of our study of diversity, we were putting our heads in the sand and ignoring something important.

Can we acknowledge and celebrate the diversity that exists all around us without feeling an area or term is taboo? If we start to dictate what terms of expression or thought may or may not be used, are we not continuing the cycle of political correctness which, by its very existence, excludes large segments of the population who are unaware of what is "correct" and thereby create an elite in-group?

We reached no consensus on these questions, but they will be revisited by each of us as we try to define our individual positions and appreciate the "diverse" positions of others.

Caring Classroom Communities

Teachers need to learn how to establish and sustain caring classroom communities, in part by successfully managing the climate, learning how to discuss issues with their students, and interacting respectfully with their students. We need to learn and teach interpersonal dynamics. All teachers and administrators should be trained in Peer Leadership and Peer Mediation/Conflict Resolution. It is necessary to get below the divisive language and behaviors to a level of commonality where mutual respect and genuine communication can take place.

New teachers need to be made aware of the fear they will feel when they are not in control of the class—sometimes because they do not understand or are not aware of their students' values and belief systems. We need to get in the students' faces with love. Confrontation should not equal violation.

Teachers of inclusive classes have legitimate concerns about how to deal with their included students. Materials need to be modified for the special education students. These modifications could benefit all students in the class.

Respectful Searching

We teachers need to cultivate an atmosphere of "respectful searching." We need to be clear what "respectful" means: the vocabulary of respect, the body language, tone and phrasing that model this behavior. Respect empowers. We need to learn to be self-reflective. We need to be in the habit of questioning what affects all of our behaviors, mannerisms and attitudes have on our students. We need to be aware what "pushes our buttons," and develop positive habits for dealing with negative feelings. Teachers are teaching ***people***, not curriculum. Teaching needs to be contextualized and authentic, with connected learning for all our goals.

"I have watched my one and only African-American student go from a very happy ninth grader to a somber, angry, aloof young man in the tenth grade. He has experienced the prejudice that seeps like venom throughout my high school. I see him now hanging out with three other black students who are emotionally disturbed. John

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is highly intelligent, yet he must seek others of color to feel some support. The social studies teacher showed the movie 'Four Little Girls' about the children who were killed during a white burning of a black church. John came to my English class directly afterward—he was almost catatonic. He could not speak. I sat next to him for a few minutes; he couldn't talk. I asked him to write a poem. He is a good poet and loves to write. He agreed. I didn't know the right words to say. I thought we could do a journal writing and then share and start some discussion, but I was afraid of what I would hear. I remember Lauren, white, who ferociously voiced her hatred of 'niggers.' That was so offensive and abhorrent. I am afraid of creating an explosive environment no matter how hard I try to teach respect. Do I not use provocative films or literature? Do I use literature and films that are farther away from them—distance it a bit? I did buy John a copy of Langston Hughes' poetry, and he loves it. Some of Hughes' poetry is so true and angry. John tends to prefer those and share them with his three other black friends."

Needless to say, our conversations before we reached awareness were rich and personal.

Connectedness in Diversity

Teachers need to have a sense of connectedness with each and all of their students. Students need to feel that connectedness also. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of all the cultures and religions involved in their classes. They must strive for at least an acceptance of these. We must not sanitize or homogenize, but rather embrace the different styles of relating to the physical and spiritual world. Teachers must not appear to be "from another planet": aloof…in a position of superior power. They should make strong associations between power and positive outcomes and changes. Interpersonal violence has roots in feelings of powerlessness. Teachers must be aware they are obliged to find and use their positive power to effect change, which is what learning is.

One participant raised the issue of staffing and community visibility. "If students look at society and see that their group is left out of participation in professional areas or trades or education opportunities, they are likely to limit their participation, their level of effort in schools. This explains why third grade African-American boys turn off to school and why girls begin to silence themselves in middle school and high school…they see that there is no access—so why put the effort in now?"

We need to find ways to use power FOR kids, rather than OVER them. We should try for "influence" as opposed to "power." Administrators make the same mistakes as teachers with respect to trying to control. Preschool and parenting programs are needed to break the cycle of social divisiveness. Participants suggested using a multicultural calendar, such as the one Frank Schaeffer publishes. Cultivate awareness of one another's cultural origin. Each day we should celebrate the day and become aware of what religion or culture holds that day as special.

Nurturing the Spiritual and Aesthetic

Teachers must refrain from oppressive practices. This statement seems self-evident at first glance. Yet this is not as straightforward as it sounds. Religion is integral to cultural norms, frequently defining acceptable classroom behaviors, gender roles, and students' orientation to curriculum. It is important to consider this question: How can we validate and express respect for a culture or religion whose beliefs include customs or practices we consider to be inappropriate, narrow-minded, illegal, immoral or even abhorrent? These issues surface in classrooms as student populations become more diverse. A number of curriculum conflicts have arisen out of issues around religion:

- Creation theory
- Prayer in schools
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Mythology—the "gods and goddesses"
- Astrology—signs of the Zodiac

Though these conflicts will continue to be sources of irritation and sometime resentment, Seminar participants believed that educators should examine themselves concerning these issues and strive for conciliation, if not reconciliation.

Addressing diversity issues need not always be a matter of lectures and readings, as is illustrated by the following example: "There are no Jewish people in our small community and there are no male dancers. It was a revelation to our sixth, seventh, and eighth grade boys when an Israeli ballet dancer danced for them and with them. He gained their trust by relating the story of his life, including service in the Israeli army. Then he danced the story of his life. And finally got them on their feet doing several dances with him - dances that expressed their emotions. I'm sure our students had many ideas in their heads, many stereotypical concepts about Jews and dancers before their experiences with Joav that day. I'm sure many new ideas replaced the old by the time they left to go home. There are so many stereotypes out there. We could do so much with real life experiences to help the kids find the truth behind them."

We all need to dance and sing more! The rich accoutrements of culture need to be experienced and encouraged.

Teacher Preparation and In-Service Training

The structure of teacher preparation and in-service training should be analyzed and amended. More authentic, community-based experiences (well supervised) are essential to good teacher preparation. Collaboration with the civic community (parents, businesses, non-profits) needs to be a large part of teacher preparation and in-service training. All teachers should develop a database of resource people from their geographic communities who will visit classes as representatives of their group or belief. Teachers should be encouraged by administration to do this and trained in how to do it.

Paid apprenticeships in the classroom should be instituted, after careful consideration of labor practice issues.

It cannot be stated emphatically enough that new teachers entering a building should each have a mentor-teacher-coach who has been trained and who works with administration to reduce the risk of failure and to model and encourage the self-reflection practices that are critical to the process of successful teaching.

"While prospective teachers generally care about children, they are still a predominately white, monolingual, middle-class, suburban group who are unfamiliar with students whose backgrounds are different from their own. They did not have a multicultural education. This leaves quite a job for teacher educators," observed one participant. The reality is that we will always have great diversity in our society and therefore in our classrooms and among our faculties and staff.

Question: What would it take to attract quality candidates to teacher preparation programs?

Good preparatory programs should be identified at local colleges and universities and should be compiled into a publication.

Teacher preparation professionals should get to know their students well enough to be able to advise those who do not have the people skills or the inclination to acquire those skills to seek employment in another area.

Every teacher preparation course should contain a multicultural element—spelled out by the professor in his/her syllabus. We refer the reader to the specific course at Sage Graduate School, entitled "Social Justice in Children's Literature." An awareness commonality builder is working here.

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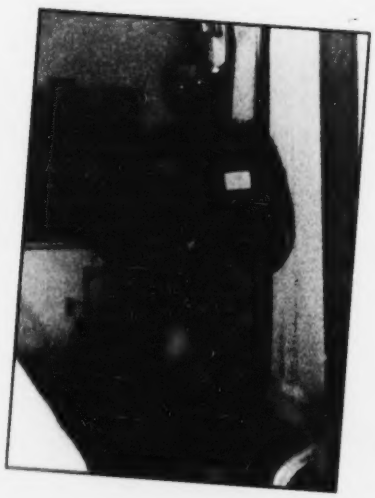
Teachers need to be trained to take advantage of the "teachable moment"—to use the golden opportunity presented to them to explore issues of race, religion, ethnicity, class, etc. When touchy statements are made in class, such as "I hate Mexicans," teachers should be able to use this opportunity instead of stonewalling it or shutting down the conversation.

All educators must provide greater emphasis, depth, and practical application of Lawrence Kohlberg's studies of morality.

Teachers need to be highly visible LEARNERS. Students need to see their passion for their subject. However, the students need to share the stage—get engaged. A teacher should have an area of specialization beyond "education" or "special education."



Socio-Economics

"Class" as an Issue of Diversity

Class cuts across ethnicity, race, gender, religion and ability considerations. When we consider a socio-economic group, there are aspects that may be unpleasant and threatening or at the very least politically incorrect, which cannot be overlooked by focusing on something else. Few, if any, educators would admit to having a bias against impoverished students; yet the reality is that most educators prefer to work in areas that they perceive as safe. The student with parents who show up at Open House, who participate in class projects, who, in short, are more like the teacher, are often the students who receive the most overt and covert encouragement. This is not a sinister plot, but a natural proclivity that needs to be checked if all students are to be genuinely included in the learning process. This is not an easy adjustment, since there is probably a higher incidence of behavior disorders and learning disabilities, along with fewer resources to address these problems, among the working class and the poor.

Immersion Experiences

What processes are currently being employed in teacher education programs to help future teachers understand diversity? Are new teachers given a setting of "unconditional positive regard" where they are compelled to openly grapple with their issues, questions and feelings? Requiring an apprentice teacher to have such a guided therapeutic experience may be a necessary prerequisite to his/her getting in touch with his/her own personal stereotypes and biases. A new teacher given this opportunity is more apt to be able to model respectful and empathic behavior to his/her students and their families.

For change to occur, people need personal experiences. All participants enthusiastically supported the necessity of including immersion experiences in teacher training programs. Research indicates that the typical teacher is white, female and middle class. How do we stretch pre-service teachers whose schooling experiences have frequently been with persons of similar class and ethnicity to recognize that their experiences are not universal? How do we give undergraduate students experiences outside their spheres of safety, which will enable them to appreciate differences and recognize that there are real equity issues among children when it comes to opportunities to learn? How do we guide pre-service teachers to include all parents in a partnership working toward developing independent, active, enthusiastic learners who feel valued, appreciated and competent in their academic and personal endeavors? Is it possible to train teachers in such a way that they are more likely to have the kind of life-changing experience that one participant related? "I was fourteen years old and away at a camp program. It was freezing, and I could not sleep. The little blanket on the bed was totally inadequate, and I lay there in the dark chattering. Then I heard a noise in the next bunk. Another girl was shivering. We started talking, and within minutes decided to share a bed and our blankets. We were at last warm enough to sleep. We had fulfilled each other's needs. She was black. I was white.

"We did not go on to become best friends or pen pals, but for that one night we had simply been two people helping each other out. My previous experiences had been primarily with other white people, some of whom did not hesitate to verbalize racial slurs. My small experience stayed with me for a lifetime and probably did more than anything I read or heard to influence my politics."

Inclusion experiences can provide the new teacher with the opportunity to live what s/he is learning. Experiential learning can reinforce the educational theories learned in the classroom and can also illustrate the limitations of theory in a real life environment. As an example, Russell Sage College holds several courses in the teacher preparation program in the neighborhood housing projects in Troy. This directly provides prospective teachers the opportunity to

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have daily contact with people who live in public housing. The program fosters a connection among the mostly middle class students of the college and the working class and poor children and families of the projects. This teacher preparation program gives new teachers the opportunity to appreciate the humanity and uniqueness of people in the project community rather than simply hear the news headlines that may be generated at this locale.

An excellent example of an immersion experience came to the participants in one of the readings which was sent to them before the second day of the Seminar. An abbreviated text of a New York State Wired Scholar's speech to the Chenango County Grange appears in the Appendix. One of the participants commented about the reading as follows: "I especially liked the New York Wired Scholar's perspective. His pride and changed focus from his experiences were what could only be called a mini-U N or in some cities a six-block area. I read about articulate, excited teenagers who bonded with diversity intact. First-hand experiences and shared time in a variety of settings with a caring leader could be another focus for preparatory programs—a diverse outward bound experience in a city—maybe even a project adventure on Western Avenue in Albany."

At the same time, we must remember that not all teachers-in-training come from middle class backgrounds. If we are successful in encouraging more teachers from working class and poor backgrounds, we must remember that their backgrounds are assets to be drawn upon, not just difficult histories to leave behind. We need to remind ourselves that shifts in class are often uncomfortable, with losses accompanying gains as one participant pointed out in this way: "We grew up in a working class neighborhood in New York City. The people on our block worked for a living—usually at some kind of manual or clerical labor. There was a bar on almost every corner, and as we got older it was these establishments that became the center of our social lives. Both my sister and I left the neighborhood a long time ago. Our lives have become very different from what they would have been had we stayed. Over time it has seemed that we have more difficulty communicating with our mother. It sometimes seems that she doesn't know us, and our interests are very different from hers.

"My sister suggested that our education led us to different worlds and in fact really changed who we were. I can't imagine being anyone else, and yet there is a certain sense of sadness—a feeling of something lost for something gained."

If we view the ideal school as a community of learners—a place where we come together to grow and to learn from one another, we must make the classroom a place where teachers, children, and their parents and guardians feel safe. We do not wish to create a retreat but an enclave for purposeful learning and exploring.

While personal experience seems to be responsible for the most profound shifts in behavior, there certainly remains a place for the printed word as a source for information, ideas, and vicarious experience. Prospective educators must be encouraged to read. Lists of recommended books that reflect our diverse culture, that detail theories and trends in education, that are examples of good literature, or in any way contribute to the improvement of the educator's understanding and performance must be compiled. Educators and those hoping to become educators must be encouraged to avail themselves of the opportunities for growth that good reading can provide.

In-Service Teacher Development

It is essential to recognize that a professional must constantly work to improve and refine his/her performance. The achievement of a degree or of tenure cannot be seen as an end to the job of educating the educator, but only as steps in a lifelong process. As our school populations become more diverse, we cannot retreat to what may have been a simpler time in the field of education and rely wholly on strategies that have become comfortable.

Teachers need to make connections with the worlds that their students are living in. Many teachers have an instinctual awareness of this need and continuously seek to broaden their experiences within the communities where they teach. Partnering with existing community programs in students' neighborhoods, such as YMCAs,

libraries, neighborhood centers, etc., can be an effective method of transcending the school walls, allowing teachers a greater understanding of their students' worlds and allowing students the opportunities to see their teachers from a different perspective.

Educators need time to talk and to work with their colleagues—not to just hang out in the faculty room but to discuss problems and trends, to share ideas and strategies that have worked for them, to discuss what they are reading and studying. Although superintendent's conference days probably were initiated to serve this purpose, they are usually too large scale and dictatorial to really accomplish true colleague interaction.

A comprehensive plan of staff development is needed to foster growth and continuously expand the consciousness of educators. We believe that it is not only the professional and ethical responsibility of individual educators to actively pursue their understanding of diverse populations, but it is also incumbent upon superintendents, building principals and school boards to establish a comprehensive plan and to create incentives that encourage all educators to participate in a variety of professional growth experiences.

Our Response to Diversity

We welcome diversity by acknowledging and valuing the differences and commonalties, so that there is harmony in differences. While we are all human, we are diverse in many ways:

- Gender
- Class (economic)
- Color
- Ethnicity
- Culture
- Religion
- Sexual Orientation
- Ability
- Age
- Physical attributes

The interplay of these factors strongly influences the uniqueness of each individual. Educators must consciously choose to engage ***all*** students in working and learning in an atmosphere of unconditional, positive regard. Students nurtured and taught in these learning communities will know and respect themselves, have a sense of personal efficacy and demonstrate connectedness to others.

Equity results from each individual actively pursuing her/his own learning in partnership with educators who are highly knowledgeable in content and methodology. Equity necessitates close observation and tailoring of instruction. The end result is differentiated instruction and enrichment to fulfill students' diverse needs.

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Afterword

"Where do we go from here? We are clarifying the issues involved in defining equity as it relates to gender, ethnicity, and socio-economics, but how do we translate this into tangible learning experiences as we prepare new educators? I look in wonder at how we will actually do this. I do feel as though I am with 'kindred spirits,' and while here in this Select Seminar feel that all is possible. Unfortunately, returning to my home school and sharing ideas with colleagues saps away at this energy to help foster changes. I feel that I must remember to approach this one person/one situation at a time, and hope that through my modeling, others will see the opportunity to do the same. How can we encourage the same spirit of collegiality and open discussion with those currently in the field of education and those pursuing it?

"My concern is that the fruits from our discussions will once again lead to no real significant change in education. Even though we walk away from the Select Seminar enriched and somewhat empowered to produce change at our institutions, it sometimes is just not enough."

This report on the Select Seminar on Preparing Educators for Diversity, we believe, will not only document our journey of awareness, understanding, and insight into the problems inherent in diversity, but will also provide those reading the report with a greater understanding of the immensity of the issues and hopefully motivate them to work toward a resolution—even if it is only one person/one situation at a time.

In closing, the following words of Nel Noddings, Professor of Education at Columbia Teachers College, further capture the essence of our mission in this Select Seminar:

"***At a time when the traditional structures of caring have deteriorated, schools must become places where teachers and students live together, talk with each other, and take delight in each other's company. My guess is that when schools focus on what really matters in life, the cognitive ends we now pursue so painfully and artificially will be achieved somewhat more naturally...It is obvious that children will work harder and do things like adding fractions for people they love and trust.***"

We thank Craig Flood, Karen Loughran, and Mary McClellan for writing sections of this final report of the Select Seminar.

Works Cited or Discussed

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Between Voice and Silence: Women and Girls, Race and Relationship by Jill McLean Taylor, Carol Gilligan, and Amy M. Sullivan

Appendix

Zadoc Angell's December, 1997 Speech to Chenango County Grange

My name is Zadoc Angell and I'm a New York Wired Scholar. What is this program that I am in? It is the New York Wired Scholars Program, which was started by the New York State Lottery in June of 1997. In August, ten high school students from across the state were chosen to become the New York Wired Scholars. From September, 1997 through May, 1998, we will visit seven regions in New York, discovering the rich culture and history of our state, as well as its promising future…Our discovery of the Empire State is being produced as an educational TV series for PBS. "New York Crossroads" will begin airing in October, 1998. The purpose of our television show is to reveal the diversity of the wonderful state in which we live and to encourage others, particularly young people, to discover its wonder for themselves.

During the third week in August, the ten of us were brought together for the first time at the campus at SUNY Albany. There was great excitement and hesitation because we did not know how to interact with each other…In a small conference room were nine other people I had never met before, and they all looked so different from me. Yet, we were about to spend the next ten months of our lives together. Now, I'm a fairly shy person and I come from a high school where the absolute majority of people are white, so when I met the scholars, I felt a culture shock. But part of the fun of being with the Wired Scholars is that we are always marveling at our differences. In that room was a blend of religions and races: we are white, black, Italian, Jewish, Muslim, Puerto Rican, Danish, Baptist, Methodist, Catholic. Each of us has a unique background; our lives are so different. Some of us come from single-parent families, some attend private schools. Kate has a booming acting career. David has lost his father to AIDS. Margarita was born to play the piano, and Shannon's writing has been published. I cannot think of a more diverse group of teenagers than this one. Initially, I was worried we would not have the right chemistry. I was afraid our personalities could not mesh. But everything changed on Tuesday of that first week in Albany. After a busy, exciting day, Ms. Rapp, the art teacher, said we could all go down to the college fountain and have some fun. In that moment, splashing and laughing in the water, we became friends for life. I have grown especially close to Stephanie DeLaCruz, the scholar from Yonkers. Stephanie comes from a school of more than a thousand, and my school holds two-hundred; she's athletic, and I'm a failure at even swinging a bat; she lives in Yonkers, and I live on a farm; she is Dominican, and I am Caucasian. Despite all these polar differences, we are wonderful friends. We cannot help but make each other laugh. Our friendship is best described by Stephanie, who wrote me once saying, "I have never developed such a strong bond with a person that I have nothing in common with."

But more important than my newfound exposure to diversities is what I could learn from them. This is best revealed through Lejla Hadzic, the Scholar from the Bronx. In an improvisation exercise designed for us by a drama teacher, eight of us pretended to be young children in a classroom. One of the girls played the teacher, who had invited a special guest to talk to the class about her homeland. The guest was played by Lejla, who in real life, is a refugee from Bosnia. During the exercise, Lejla talked about her experiences in Bosnia, and when she was finished, there was not a dry eye in the room. Lejla told us about how whole villages had been slaughtered, how the people's throats were slit, and how their bodies were then tossed over a bridge. She related that her aunt had died due to casual gunfire and that babies and young children were frequent victims of the violence. She left an indelible impression on all of us. To think Lejla could come from a home of fear and terror in Bosnia and adjust to a life in the comparatively luxurious United States

is remarkable to me. After the moving experience, we talked to Lejla about the politics involved. She said that when the civil war first broke out, most of the people were confident that the United States would end the fighting. Instead, they were given Western band-aids instead of peace. You see, Lejla is a Muslim, and although they are the majority in Bosnia, the Serbians have controlled the army since the end of the Cold War. Lejla gets frustrated when she hears about Bosnia in the news. She told me, "They [reporters] say we're fighting each other, but they're trying to kill us!" She said that one village was protected by the U.N. for three years. Suddenly, the U.N. decided the troops were needed elsewhere, and they removed the forces. With no protection, the Muslims in the village were left prey to the Serbians, and the Serbs certainly made use of the opportunity. Thanks to incidents like these, I somehow think Lejla has not felt very safe all her life…

And so, I learned my first big lesson in the Wired Scholars program: no matter how different we seem, there are always similarities between us and ways we can learn from each other. Maybe I thought I already knew that, but it was something quite different to experience for the first time.

Being in the Wired Scholars program has taught me many things: the diversities that surround us, the ways in which we can learn from each other, and the importance of doing what we feel passionate about. I know I will carry these things with me for the rest of my life, not to mention the nine new friendships I have made. ■

Notes